



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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District of Arizona*

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MAN CHARGED WITH ENDANGERING FIVE ALIENS IN CRASH NEAR PICACHO PEAK

TUCSON, Ariz. -- Marco Antonio Mejia-Luna, 22, a Mexican national and legal permanent resident of the United States, was charged with transporting five aliens for financial gain and placing their lives in jeopardy when he crashed while attempting to elude Border Patrol agents.

According to the complaint filed Monday August 28, 2006 in the U.S. District Court in Tucson, U.S. Border Patrol agents spotted Mejia-Luna on August 27 driving a white Isuzu Rodeo heading north on I-10 near Red Rock. When agents attempted to identify the license plate, the vehicle began swerving in and out of traffic attempting to elude the Border Patrol unit. The vehicle eventually exited I-10 at Picacho Peak, ran through a stop sign and rolled over. Mejia-Luna was seen fleeing the scene on foot and was captured by Border Patrol. Five aliens who were also in the Isuzu Rodeo ran a short distance before giving themselves up to Border Patrol agents. All five were identified as Mexican citizens present in the U.S. illegally. Two of the illegal aliens were juveniles, 14 and 15 years old. One juvenile was treated for a cut on his head. During questioning two other aliens being transported identified Mejia-Luna as the driver and said they were picked up at an unknown house near Nogales, Arizona and were being taken north when the crash occurred. Witnesses stated they were being charged \$2,000 per person to be transported to a final destination and the money was to be sent to a smuggler in Mexico upon arrival.

A conviction for transporting illegal aliens for financial gain and placing the lives of the illegal aliens in jeopardy carries a maximum penalty of 20 years, a \$250,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, the District Court Judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

A criminal complaint is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The prosecution is being handled by Munish Sharda, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix (Tucson, Ariz.).

CASE NUMBER: Mag. No. 06-8142M (JCG)
RELEASE NUMBER: 2006-176(Mejia-Luna)

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